

## KASGANJ RIOTS

On January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 and following two days, Kasganj of Kotwal area in UP was rocked by communal riots. A town, which was known for peace and communal harmony, was suddenly pushed into these riots. A person, Chandan Gupta, said to belong to VHP, has died in the clashes.

The facts, as narrated by the local people, concerning the incident are like this :

It was Republic Day. As is the practice there every year, the people of Kasganj organised a flag hoisting ceremony at Veer Abdul Hamid Chowk, next to a primary school. This year, it was organised on a grand scale. When the celebrations were on, over 100 youth belonging to VHP and ABVP came in a rally on motor bikes, holding tiranga and saffron flags in hands and raising slogans. They sought to push through their way through the congested lanes of Badoo Nagar where the flag hoisting ceremony was on. The organisers of ceremony requested the motorists to take another route as it was not the main road and a function was under way. But they did not listen and resorted to use expletives against the Muslims and asked them to go to Pakistan. This has ignited emotions and the clashes broke out between the sections of people of two communities. The rioters have damaged several vehicles. They tried to set fire to a local Mosque, ransacked and looted a two-storey house of a prominent Muslim businessman.

Next morning, ie, on Jan'28<sup>th</sup>, Chandan Gupta's last rites were completed. Within Minutes after this, a mob went on a spree of burning shops and buses. The peace loving people felt helpless because of utter inaction on the part of the police. According to D.K.Thakur, IG, Agra, 99 per cent of the shops burnt down belonged to the Muslims.

The police imposed curfew, suspended the internet services, deployed the PAC and RAF and held a flag march. By Jan'30, it arrested a total of 112 persons and filed FIR against them under various criminal sections. Normalcy came after the traders, the leaders of political parties and the members of both communities met in a peace Meeting and pledged to restore peace and communal harmony.

But the question is, will the real culprits responsible for the communal riots be brought to book and suitably punished. It is not only because the BJP is in power in UP and the Centre, but also certain utterances of some important leaders of Sangh Parivar reflect a dangerous trend.

Giriraj Singh, a senior leader of BJP has said : "Had the deceased been Mohammad Ismaayil instead of Chandan Gupta there would have been a different debate in the Media. We have to change the mindset." This leader knows it well that it is the innocent Muslims, other minorities, Dalits, rationalist, progressive forces who are always at the receiving end in the aggressive attacks perpetrated by the Hindutva forces in India. No one welcomes or enjoys the death of Chandan Gupta in Kasganj. But the bitter truth remains he was the victim of communal frenzy ignited by the Hindutva forces.

Ms. Niranjana Jyoti, a VHP leader, Jr. Food Processing Minister in Yogi Adityanath's UP Govt. has this to say : "But some pro-Pakistan people have come who are not accepting national flag. They only accept Pakistan flag and Pakistan Zindabad." Vinay Katiyar, a BJP MP, has said ; "There were some miscreants who support Pakistan and would go to any extent to defy the tricolour. They need to be dealt strictly." Niranjana Jyoti came to lime light in the context of 2014 Ram temple Campaign through her hate Muslims speeches. Then she said : "The people of Delhi have to decide if they want a Govt. of Ramzaadon (followers of Ram) or a Govt. of those who are illegitimate." She had to apologise for the statement later.

One can understand how this kind of blatant justification from the top leaders of the BJP to the acts of communal frenzy by the mobs led by the VHP and ABVP will vitiate the probe into the communal riots and what justice may come out. The fact remains, the storm troopers of Hindutva are only guided in their actions by the ideas of this leadership. So it is the task of the democratic forces to thoroughly and to the end fight the ideology, politics and practices of the forces of Hindutva.

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